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SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN MAKING SOLID PROGRESS ON TIP COMMITMENTS

¶1. (SBU) The GOAJ has made substantial progress in the past several months to meet its trafficking in persons (TIP) commitments outlined in the USG's annual trafficking in persons report. In the two months since PolOff last visited the site of the victims' shelter, the GOAJ has transformed a building that a year ago appeared entirely unworkable into something that will soon become a proper shelter. Representatives from both OSCE and IOM positively assessed the workmanship and are currently advising the GOAJ on the necessary furnishings, which is essentially all the shelter needs to be complete. Rooms for the victims, communal rooms, medical rooms, kitchens, sick bays, and exercise rooms are complete and bathrooms have been equipped with appropriate accommodations. The GOAJ is working with the OSCE to determine the appropriate passive security measures, some of which have already been installed. These will include surveillance cameras discreetly placed throughout the outside of the property, decorative bars on all windows (common on houses in Azerbaijan) complete with electronic breakers to set off a signal if opened, and a perimeter wall. Entrance through the gate in the perimeter wall and the front door will be controlled electronically from a small control room inside the shelter where video footage and alarms will be accessible. While renovation of the shelter has no doubt sparked some interest of local residents, we expect that it will soon blend into Baku's landscape.

¶2. (SBU) Given the pending completion of the secure accommodation for victims, the international community working group is hard at work with the GOAJ to staff the shelter and the TIP hotline with trained NGO representatives to take over the management of both measures. More than 30 NGO activists have signed up to work on the shelter and hotline respectively, understanding the commitment that the task ahead of them will require. The GOAJ has almost completed its vetting process of the individuals and we expect that we will be able to start training the groups with experts provided by ABA/CEELI, IOM, and INL by mid-April. These three organizations are devising a training module that will include Azerbaijan's TIP legal framework, psychological training, management, and best practices from throughout the world. Following these steps and in cooperation with the GOAJ, we are confident that Azerbaijan will have the appropriate infrastructure in place to appropriately care for and manage its trafficking in persons victims and their families.

¶3. (SBU) During a regular meeting with the National TIP Coordinator on March 28, PolOff also learned that the vetting process of the Special Police Anti-Trafficking Squad (SPATS) has been completed and the successful officers appointed to the unit. This follows the February written and oral testing of the candidates, which was open to both domestic and international community observation. The examination process was conducted relatively smoothly (in particular given that

this was the first time the Ministry of Internal Affairs had undertaken such a process) and the Coordinator welcomed the written commendations and recommendations the international community working group presented to him. The Coordinator said that he would welcome further international community assistance in testing/vetting processes, and he believes the process undertaken for the SPATS will become a model for the GOAJ. Following the news that the background investigations on the officers have been completed, RLEA plans to follow up with the MIA to receive a more detailed brief on the conduct of that process.

14. (SBU) In addition, the GOAJ has been instrumental in the prosecution of a TIP case in the United States with local connections. Earlier this year, two Azerbaijani citizens were convicted in a U.S. federal court for trafficking crimes, one of whom received the longest sentence ever handed down in a sex trafficking case. (Their sentences were 20 years and 10 years, four months, respectively.) The GOAJ played an instrumental role with the USG to investigate the TIP crime from the country of origin and provide relevant information to U.S. federal prosecutors to clinch the case. Not satisfied with merely catching the operatives in the U.S., the GOAJ and in particular the Coordinator worked proactively with USG officers on the ground to investigate the two local recruiters/middlemen. The GOAJ worked with USG experts to build the case against the two recruiters who were involved in luring the women, facilitating their visas (including posing as family members for the women), document falsification, etc. to get the young women from Azerbaijan to the Azerbaijani handlers in New York. This case will likely go to court in Azerbaijan in the next week.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: Given the positive progress to date, we believe the GOAJ has hit a point of "critical mass" on its

BAKU 00000478 002 OF 002

TIP efforts such that sufficient inertia has been created to prevent possible regression. The GOAJ is clearly enthused and proud of the achievements it has made to date and we believe that under the current Coordinator's leadership, this issue will continue to receive high-level GOAJ attention and effort.
HARNISH